

March 27, 2012

Dear Representatives of the Families, Children & Seniors Committee,

Michigan is one of 7 states in the United States that has not adopted parity for mental health. Because of this fact my family's quality of life has greatly suffered.

Every month I have to choose between making a house payment, keeping the utilities on, purchasing medication, and feeding my family. The constant stress, cost, and time management as my family goes searching for affordable services, has resulted in the loss of jobs, the loss of my car, and almost the loss of my home.

Please take a few minutes to walk with me as I struggle to get the needs of my children met.

It's 4 am and I am holding my child as they are screaming out in pain, telling the emergency nurse their head is going to explode, and they just want to die. The emergency room doctor looks at me with contempt, asking why this child is not on their medication. I then explain that the doctor who usually prescribes the medications is no longer accepting the child's insurance, and I was not notified. I have spent the last 45 days trying to locate a doctor who would take the insurance. The hospital writes a script for 30 days worth of medication, and gives me discharge papers to see the primary care doctor, who will not prescribe psychiatric medications.

Three days after approaching the Community Mental Health System for a different child, and I am waiting for an assessment and a medication review, my teenager tries to kill himself with a knife. The police became involved. As a parent with experience I know that they can fast track him through the emergency room and place him on a 72 hour hold. So I request the officers to do so. The hospital gets him stabilized; however follow up care will be my responsibility.

Another child was arrested for being involved in destruction of property and spends 6 months in the Kent County Jail where their idea of treating his mental illness is only to give him a different colored uniform. No medication and no counseling were offered to my child.

Now contrast this with the care my youngest child who has autism and co-morbid psychiatric condition received. He became very aggressive after he discovered his grandmother has ovarian cancer. He threw the couch across the floor. I called his case worker, he was placed in residential treatment for 5 days, his medications were adjusted, a comprehensive plan was implemented and he came home.

What was the difference between my children's care? My youngest son had Medicaid under a DD waiver, and my other three children had private insurance.

Parity for all allows:

P= parent voice

A=assessments and choice

R=remarkable outcomes for all children

I=inclusive comprehensive care

T=tailor made and

Y=youth guided for each child.

I am asking you to support Mental Health Parity in addition to supporting coverage for children with Autism by including a Mental Health Parity bill with SB 414, 415, and 981.

Sincerely,

Jayne Johnson

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